

**557 Advanced Cinematography**

"If you could say it in words there would be no reason to paint."

Edward Hopper

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Stage Prep</b> (as scheduled) <b>Class</b> 1p – 5p	<b>Soundstage #3</b>
Instructor:	Christopher Chomyn, ASC www.chrischomyn.com https://cinematographersportal.com	213-300-2126 - cell cchomyn@gmail.com
Office Hours:	SCA 421	by appointment
Student Assistant:	Wenqi You	(213) 509-3199 wyou@usc.edu
2 Units		

It is recommended that students enrolling in 557 have completed 480 or 546 as cinematographer. However, 424 or 537 satisfy the prerequisite. In enrolling in 557, each student agrees to the class schedule. Do not enroll in 557 if doing so will cause you scheduling conflicts.

**Overview:**

557 is designed to provide a unique cinematographer centric experience. Advanced students are expected to explore all aspects of cinematography in the challenge to create works that showcase their individual sensibilities. Clear communication, effective leadership and challenging one's creative boundaries are essential for a successful semester.

Camera placement, lens selection, movement, composition, lighting and exposure are the fundamental building blocks of the cinematic image. These in service of your story, as well as methods for working constructively with other creative talents involved in filmmaking will be the main emphasis of this course.

557 will provide many opportunities for conversations beyond lighting and photography. Topics may include, the ethical responsibilities of the cinematographer, professional responsibilities, building a professional career, the value of crewing, negotiation techniques, representation, union membership, reels, websites, bios...family, travel, sailing, etc....

**Class Structure:**

Each student will photograph two projects: one in-class and one out-of-class. All projects must be original content for which you have the rights. You may not use previously published works protected by copyright.

We will begin each class by screening and discussing the results from the previous week's work. If possible we will schedule optional working field trips, outside of class. These may include museums, lab facilities, rental houses, etc. In addition, each student will research and present on a topic to be assigned in the first class meeting.

If you want to reserve the stage in order to prep for your in class shoot prior to class, or reserve a stage for your out of class shoot you will need to contact staging services [stages@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:stages@cinema.usc.edu)

**In-class Exercise:**

You will serve as the director/cinematographer on a scene of your own design to be shot on stage during class time, with the rest of the class as crew on a rotating basis. Your scene should create an opportunity for you to grow by exploring new creative challenges, while providing opportunities for your classmates to elevate their technical skills and increase their proficiency in supporting your production

As director/cinematographer you are responsible to cast actors, and arrange for set dressing, props, practical lamps, etc. for your in-class exercise. Your classmates are not your actors. Extend yourself and be creative. Plan ahead and embrace the challenge. Remember, the prop room on Stage 1 has some interesting (and free) options.

Each student will submit a written and visual proposal for her/his exercise that includes a description of his/her scene, what s/he hopes to learn from it and the proposed methodology at least a week advance.

**Out of Class projects:**

This is your chance to create something extraordinary, to push yourself and demonstrate your untapped talents. It is expected that you make the most of every opportunity.

Your project, including crew assignments and camera selection, must be approved by your professor in advance. You may consider any "story" structure that works for your material. \*(If you miss the RED training session, you will not be approved to shoot on the RED Weapon.) Possibilities include: a public service announcement, product photography, a short narrative (3 minute max is recommended) or other experimental format.

Your out of class project may be photographed on stage or location with the appropriate preparation and permissions.

Each group will shoot for one entire weekend (Fri, Sat, Sun) with each cinematographer having one day for her/his shoot.

Whether you elect to shoot your project on campus or at an off campus location, all regular USC policies and protocols applicable to Production III must be followed. This includes hazardous shooting procedures. In order to facilitate this, you will be required to enlist the services of a currently enrolled USC Cinema Student as your producer. If you shoot on stage, working with a producer is also strongly advised.

1. Anticipating a roster of 12 students, the class will form into four production groups for the purpose of sharing the digital cinema camera package for each group's production weekend.
2. On the days when you are not shooting your own final project, you are required to crew for your classmate who is shooting. Students enrolled in 557 must fulfill the key crew positions: director/cinematographer, camera operator, AC, Gaffer, Key Grip, Dolly Grip, and Production Designer (you may bring in an outside production designer with the approval of your instructor).
3. Your classmates are not actors, nor extras. You must cast your actors and adhere to the guidelines in USC's agreement with the Screen Actor's Guild (SAG).
4. With the consent of your instructor, you may use additional crew, providing they are USC students who have taken or are taking 327, 424, 537 or 547.
5. You may elect to bring in an additional student, not from our class, to coach your actors. This acting "director" must be a USC student who has completed 533, 480 or 546 as director. He/she will serve as an acting coach, and will not direct the camera nor crew.
6. If you elect to shoot on stage, you must make your own stage reservation.
7. Each team will meet with the professor to consult regarding their plans for this project.
8. Each team is responsible to arrange actors, props, set design and any additional elements needed to mount your production.
9. On the Monday one week before you shoot: A) you will need to submit a brief statement of intent - a series of bullet points indicating what you are trying to accomplish, why and how; and, B) You will need to submit your completed crew list (The template is on the website).
10. Following your shoot: you will submit a self critique of your experience, what went well, what could have gone better, what you learned from the experience.
11. All work for this class, must be completed before we screen final projects.
12. Final format for the screening QT file.

Be inventive, experiment, and create a visually arresting piece that challenges you.

**Course Goals:**

557 will address the technical and aesthetic aspects of cinematography with an emphasis on developing techniques and operating methods that will prepare each student to transition to a professional working environment.

In learning to make informed, accurate, and ethically appropriate decisions concerning the cinematography of a film, the students will demonstrate that they can apply a number of skills necessary for the working cinematographer consistently, effectively, and artistically. Among them:

1. Behave in a safe and professional manner at all times.
2. Break down a script visually in terms of mood, shooting style, and pace.
3. Make practical and aesthetic choices regarding film stocks and/or digital imaging tools.
4. Understand the significance of camera placement as it affects the look and feel of a shot.
5. Control depth-of-field.
6. Choose an appropriately sized shot and composition for the story.
7. Understand how to stage actors for compelling shots that serve the story.
8. Maintain screen direction and eye lines.
9. Effective camera movement.
10. Incident and reflected exposure metering techniques.
11. Lighting for the mood and tone of a piece while maintaining continuity within each scene.
12. Control the four elements of light.
13. Use the tools of the cinematographer, lenses, cameras, filtration, etc.
14. Use equipment that is available to achieve the desired effect.
15. Safety procedures and responsible behavior/decision-making.
16. Lead a cast and crew effectively.
17. Manage set resources efficiently.
18. Communicate clearly.
19. Listen carefully.
20. Earn the respect of your colleagues.

**Recommended Books:**

- o American Society of Cinematographers Manual, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition
- o Kodak Cinematographers Field Guide
- o Digital Cinematography: Fundamentals, Tools, Techniques, and Workflows by David Stump
- o The Death and Rebirth of Cinema: Mastering the Art of Cinematography in the Digital Cinema Age By Harry Mathias

**Grading:**

The work you create in class will be its own reward. Your grade for this class will be based on your collaboration and support of your fellow classmates, as well as on your participation in the various support positions (ie. AC, electrician, grip, etc.). Additional consideration will be given for those students who push themselves to take creative risks. Finally, too much ambition that results in not completing your goals, will adversely affect your grade....

25%: Class Participation (In-class Discussions, Presentations and Screenings)

25% In Class Exercises

50%: Out of Class Project

**Dress Code:** The sound stage is an industrial work environment. All students must come to class prepared for physical work. You must wear long pants and close toed shoes. Shorts, skirts, dresses, sandals and flip-flops will not be allowed. If you come inappropriately attired, you will be asked to leave and will be marked absent. I also strongly suggest you bring leather palmed work gloves and appropriate tools.

**Attendance:**

Due to the hands-on "workshop" structure to this class, and the interdependence of the students, attendance is mandatory. Engaging in every crew position and learning the unique assignments and duties of each is an integral part of a cinematographer's formal training. By learning the details of each crew position, a cinematographer can better understand the inner workings of the set and the crew at large.

Each week you will rotate from one crew position to the next. Each absence will result in the

reduction of the final grade by half a letter (A to A-, A- to B+, B+ to B, etc.). For an absence to be excused, you must notify the professor prior to the start of class, and provide a doctor's note, court documents or other verifiable evidence pertaining to a family emergency. You must also notify your classmates, so they can anticipate and prepare for your absence.

**Late Paperwork:** All assignments are due on time. This means that any requests for film stock, additional gear (PEC) and presentations for 35mm projects as well as outside project meetings, must adhere to established professional policies. We will share our upgraded calendars with the class and expect that all students will check in to see any changes as they come through. Each student has been assigned a USC email address and will provide the faculty with a current and functioning phone number so they can receive time sensitive communications relevant to the course.

### **Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards*

<https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault and harassment are not tolerated by The University. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

### **Support Systems**

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

[http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.

If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

For articles that may interest you, follow me at: <http://www.facebook.com/ChristopherChomynASC/>

# Fall Schedule

(This schedule is subject to change as necessary and at the discretion of the instructor)

<b>Class</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<b>Week 1</b> <sup>bc</sup> August 21	Introduction to Class Schedule 2 <sup>nd</sup> Week makeup session Assign Presentations Form Production Trios Panavision GII Overview
<b>Week 2</b> <sup>w3w</sup> August 28	Afternoon Class <b>Stage 3</b> 1-4:50p 12 Presentations Review Panavision GII Loading Magazines
August 30	Shoot of 35mm Exposure Tests <b>MAKE UP CLASS Stage 2</b> 8-11:50p 12 Presentations Review Panavision GII Loading Magazines
<b>Week 3</b> <sup>D3W</sup> September 4 September 6	<b>Labor Day – No Classes</b> <b>MAKE UP CLASS Stage 2</b> 1-4:50p
<b>Week 4</b> <sup>D</sup> September 11	Screen Dailies 35mm In-class Exercise
<b>Week 5</b> September 18	Screen Dailies 35mm In-class Exercise
<b>Week 6</b> September 25	Screen Dailies 35mm In-class Exercise Final Project Description Due
<b>Week 7</b> <sup>w3</sup> October 2	Screen Dailies 35mm In-class Exercise
<b>Week 8</b> <sup>D3W</sup> October 9	Screen Dailies 35mm In-class Exercise
<b>Week 9</b> <sup>DW</sup> October 16	Screen Dailies 35mm In-class Exercise
October 19	Thursday Group A Production Filming Paperwork Due Group A Production Consult

<b>Week 10</b> <sup>W3</sup> October 23	<b>MORNING? Stage 2</b> 8-11:50a (Digital Camera Overview) Stage Prep 11a Screen Dailies 35mm In-class Exercise
October 24 October 26	Tuesday – Group B Production Consult Thursday – Group B Production Filming Paperwork Due
<b>Week 11</b> <sup>D3</sup> October 30	Stage Prep 9a Screen Dailies 35mm In-class Exercise
October 31 November 2 November 3 - 5	Tuesday – Group C Production Consult Thursday – Group D Production Filming Paperwork Due Friday – Sunday Team A Shoots Digital Final Projects C Crews Friday – Sunday Team D Shoots Digital Final Projects B Crews
<b>Week 12</b> <sup>D</sup> November 6	Stage Prep 9a Screen Dailies 35mm In-class Exercise
November 7 November 10 - 12	Tuesday – Group D Production Consult Friday – Sunday Team B Shoots Digital Final Projects D Crews Friday – Sunday Team C Shoots Digital Final Projects Team A Crews
<b>Week 13</b> November 13	Stage Prep 9a Screen Dailies 35mm In-class Exercise
<b>Week 14</b> November 20	Stage Prep 9a Screen Dailies 35mm In-class Exercise
<b>Week 15</b> November 27	Stage Prep 9a Screen Dailies (including select Team D dailies) 35mm In-class Exercise <i>Prepare for screening of final projects</i>
<b>Week 16</b> Wednesday Dec 6 11a – 1 p	Screen Out of Class Projects (Location TBD)